PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

Shri K. Natwar Singh, Member, made a personal Explanation

SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH (Rajasthan): Mr. Chairman, Sir, when the situation of the people of Iraq became desperate, the Congress Party decided to send a fraternal delegation to Baghdad. The delegation was led by me. I visited Baghdad in January 2001. The Congress President gave me a letter of introduction to President of Saddam Hussain which letter I delivered to the Deputy Prime Minister of Iraq, Mr. Tariq Aziz, on my arrival in Baghdad.

I made a brief call on the Oil Minister of Iraq as a matter of courtesy because he had been in India and a number of other dignitaries.

During my entire stay in Baghdad, no discussion or talk took place with any Iraqi authority with regard to the Oil For Food Programme, oil contracts, vouchers, bank accounts, etc. The delegation was a political delegation. The administrative arrangements and the logistics were in the hands of Anil Mathrani, who was the Secretary of the Foreign Affairs department of the party of which I was Chairman. The delegation consisted of four members - Shri Shiv Shankar, Shri A.R. Antulay, Shri Anil Mathrani and me. Shri Vohra has confirmed and so has the Pathak Authority. My son accompanied me and I paid for his fare. There is no document approved by me to add any names to the delegation. I had no authority to do so. I have made this clear on several occasions that no names were added. The Pathak Authority has also agreed that there were only four members of the delegation.

On my return I briefed the Congress President about our discussion in Baghdad and nothing was concealed or held back.

The Oil For Food Programme was started under the auspices of the United Nations. When complaints arose about the misuses of this programme, the Independent Inquiry Committee was appointed to look into these malpractices and abuses by the United Nations personnel in conducting this programme. Mr. Paul Volcker submitted his final report at the end of October, 2005. The annexures to the report mentioned my name; and the name of the Congress Party, as non-contractual beneficiaries. No evidence was produced in the Volcker report as to how and why our names were added. I repeat, no evidence was produced in the Volcker report as to how and why our names were added. And, by

whom? I shall not go into it here; I will do so later. In my affidavit, I have given details of Mr. Volcker's bias against those who disapproved of the U.S. actions in West Asia and elsewhere. My affidavit and statement to the Pathak Authority have been completely ignored by the Authority.

The Permanent Mission of India at United Nations in New York, thrpugh Shri Harsh Vardhan Shingla, Minister in our UN Mission, made the following points in a communication sent to the Ministry of External Affairs on 30th October, 2005, and I quote: "(1) The Independent Inquiry Committee is headed by Paul Volcker, former Chairman of the U.S. Federal Reserve whose inclination would be to discredit the opponents of U.S. Policy; (2) No evidence has been cited and no documentation given on most of the allegations made; (3) Due process was not observed because none of the non-contractual entities....

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS AND THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI SURESH PACHOURI): Sir, I have a point of order. सर, मेरा व्यवस्था का प्रश्न यह है कि माननीय सदस्य ने रूल 241 के तहत अपने personal explanation की इजाजत माँगी है। मान्यवर, अगर Kaul and Shakdher के पेज 413 देखें, तो उसमें यह स्पष्ट है "If any portion thereof is considered objectionable or beyond the scope of personal explanation, the Member is asked to delete it from his statement." सर, मेरी विनम्र प्रार्थना यह है, यद्यपि यह एक debatable issue है, माननीय सदस्य अगर रूल 241 देखें, तो वह बड़ा स्पष्ट है "A Member may, with the permission of the Chairman, make a personal explanation although there is no question before the Council, but in this case, no debatable matter -- I shall stress, 'no debatable matter' -- may be brought forward, and no debate shall arise. मान्यवर, आपके जरिए मेरी प्रार्थना यह है कि माननीय सदस्य आपकी इजाजत से अपना personal explanation दे रहे हैं, उसमें मुझे कुछ नहीं कहना है। लेकिन समय-समय पर जो रूलिंग्स दी गई हैं, रूलिंग 475, 480, रूलिंग 477, 478, इनसे यह बिल्कुल स्पष्ट है कि उनसे सम्बन्धित जो बात है, उसका personal explanation वे आपकी इजाजत से दे सकते हैं, लेकिन जो debatable issue है, उसको अगर ये लाएँ, तो मैं सोचता हूँ कि यह नियमों के प्रतिकूल होगा। यह मेरी आपसे प्रार्थना है। तो अगर ये अपने से सम्बन्धित बात तक सीमित रहें, तो वह ज्यादा बेहतर होगा।

श्री सभापति : ठीक है।

श्री नटवर सिंह : सर, मैं जो बयान कर रहा हूँ ...(व्यवधान)...

श्री सभापति : आप तो बयान पर चलिए ...(व्यवधान)...

श्री नटवर सिंह : यह तो आपने approve कर दिया है, उसके बगैर मैं बोल ही नहीं सकता। ...**(व्यवधान)**...

श्री सभापति : चलिए, आगे चलिए।

SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH: "(3) Due process was not observed because none of the non-contractual entities was asked, through Permanent Mission of India, to respond to the allegations."

It is not surprising, therefore, that no country in the world has taken any notice of the Volcker Report. Let me repeat, Sir. It is not surprising, therefore, that no country in the world has taken any notice of the Volcker Report.

The Pathak Authority report has not attached my affidavit that was given to it. Why then were we asked to submit affidavits and asked to make statements before the Authority? It has not attached a copy of the statement that I made to the Pathak Authority exposing the flaws and loopholes in the Volcker Report. Although the report of the Pathak Authority is a flawed document, but it is categorical about what matters most to me.

The authority has in clear terms said that I and my son derived no financial gain from any source. We stand fully vindicated, and, that is all that matters to me.

I find that much has been made out of the three letters I wrote to the Oil Minister of Iraq. Normally, I would not have bothered to discuss these. However, since they seem to have been given such intense importance by Justice Pathak, and my party, *. Are we always aware what they are used for ...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Nobody writes letters. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH: ...are we responsible for how they are used? However, in this case, I would like to point out that even if they were used for oil contracts, these were legitimate contracts under the United Nations Oil for Food programme. I am entitled to ask, Sir, what illegality was committed by me in India or internationally? Furthermore, if I were to have asked for a favour, I would have done so for myself or my son. At no stage did I ask for any favours for myself or my son. And, I

* Expunged as ordered by the Chair.

could have asked Tariq Aziz verbally to give me whatever amount I wanted, I did not do so.

The last nine months have been most unpleasant and disagreeable and a great strain on me and my family. Throughout this period, Sir, we have acted with candor, courage, dignity and restraint. The channel to my soul and conscience is immune to the chatter and clatter of those whose links with decency, ethics and morality are non-existent.

Paragraph 15.8 of the Pathak Authority report clearly states that on August 21, 2001, the Executive Director, SOMO wrote to the Iraqi Oil Minister seeking the approval of the allocation of one million barrels of crude oil "for the benefit of the Indian Congress Party". After the approval by the Iraqi Oil Minister, this contract was also sent for the approval of the United Nation Observer; Justice Pathak then says enigmatically, "How the name of the Indian Congress Party came to be mentioned in this letter is not known". But, Sir, this is precisely what he was required to find out. Instead of doing so, he surmises, as if he had entered the mind of the Iraqi authorities, that what appeared to be the reason to him was that I and my son so projected ourselves that the Iraqi authorities formed the impression that we were representatives of the Congress party, whose representative was I when I went there. This is mere conjecture on his part in order to implicate me and my son and does him no credit. Sir, clearly, therefore, Justice Pathak's conclusions dealing with the contract in which I was mentioned as the non-contractual beneficiary and the contract in which the Congress party was mentioned as non-contractual beneficiary are at best questionable. He has not explained why I would ask for one contract in my name and another in the name of the Congress party. In neither case has he produced any evidence of my linkage except through surmises and assumptions. I would like to state with all the emphasis at my command that nowhere have I signed any contract, received any voucher, signed any receipt or made any transaction whatsoever with any party.

Justice Pathak also did not examine the circumstances under which the Volcker Committee in its 5th Report included my name as a non-contractual beneficiary, did not verify the documents on which such a conclusion was based and gives no explanation of how the name of many companies, mostly from the US, were removed, as this was said in this House when the House discussed the report some months ago.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, I joined the Indian Foreign Service in 1953. I have had a reasonably successful career in the diplomatic service of India. I voluntarily left the Foreign Service and joined the Congress party in 1984 with the approval of Shrimati Indira Gandhi and Shri Rajiv Gandhi in the hope that I would in a modest way be able to serve my people and my country better. I dare say that the record of my public life has been without blemish. I was awarded the Padma Bhushan in January 1984 by Shrimati Indira Gandhi. I have the good fortune to belong to a well-known and valiant family. God has been kind to me and given me enough. I have no reason, therefore, to indulge in acts of impropriety of this nature for petty financial gains. Sir, I have placed my views before this august House and before you from a moral and ethical point of view. I have not argued from a lawyer's brief.

Sir, I am in the evening of my life and I shall meet the Cosmic Master with my head high. Clean I came into the world and clean I shall depart. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Kindly see page 4. You said in your statement.* There were objections from some hon. Members of the House to this line.

SHRI NATWAR SINGH: Please remove it, if there is any objection.

श्री शरद यादव (बिहार) : सभापति जी, मुझको भी मौका मिलेगा या नहीं? मैंने आपको नोटिस दिया है।

श्री सभापति : किस बारे में?

श्री शरद यादव : मैंने आपको नोटिस भेजा है, जो दिल्ली में तोड़-फोड़ होने वाली है, उस बारे में। इस सदन ने इस बारे में एक बिल पास किया था, उसके बावजूद सुप्रीम कोर्ट से यह आदेश फिर से आ गया है कि दिल्ली के सारे के सारे बाजार...

श्री सभापति : अभी तो आप बैठ जाइए, यह ज़ीरो ऑवर है।

श्री शरद यादव : सारे के सारे बाजार फिर से तोड़े जाएंगे, इस बारे में मैंने आपको नोटिस दिया है।

श्री सभापति : अभी आप बैठ जाइए, अभी मैं ज़ीरो ऑवर ले रहा हूं। श्रीमती एन0पी0 दुर्गा।

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* Expunged as ordered by the Chair.